United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Wildlife Services

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WILDLIFE SERVICES—OHIO

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Ohio

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Ohio Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Ohio is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and forested environments with more than 11 million residents. Croplands, pastures, and forested areas make up more than 80 percent of Ohio's landscape. WS biologists help Ohio's livestock and agricultural producers reduce losses from predators and birds, and protect humans, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies. In addition, WS protects pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft at 29 Ohio airports and military installations. In fiscal year (FY) 2004, WS biologists assisted customers who reported wildlife damage in excess of $650,567.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance,* to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS' role in protecting public health and safety, air travel, and livestock.

Protecting Health and Safety—Raccoon rabies entered Ohio in 1996 in the northeast counties adjacent to Pennsylvania. By the end of 1997,

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting livestock from vulture and coyote predation
- Protecting public safety and property damage from Canada geese, gull, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting aquaculture from bird depredation

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Ohio:
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing predators to protect livestock and wildlife
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, pseudorabies and brucellosis
- Reducing blackbird/starling damage to crops and feedlots
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vulture damages utilizing new methods

Ohio reported 62 cases, which threatened public health and safety. In an effort to halt the westward spread of raccoon rabies across Ohio and into the Midwest, WS cooperated with other Federal and State agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. As part of the program, oral vaccination baits are dropped throughout the target area.

July 2004 a raccoon turned up positive 6.6 miles beyond the bait zone in Lake County. USDA immediately started a large scale trap vaccinate and release program, to aid in the efforts to create an immune barrier followed by coated sachet oral vaccine dropped by air. Enhanced surveillance including roadkill and nuisance animals were tested to find the extent of the outbreak. Over the course of the year a total of 45 raccoons and 1 skunk were found to be positive for the raccoon strain of the virus. No positive cases were ever discovered in 2004 through out the historically baited portion of the state, even though surveillance was high. In 2005 WS will continue efforts to define the scope of the outbreak using enhanced surveillance to monitor the population for presence of the rabies virus. Trapping to collect blood and tooth samples to test the efficacy of the bait drops will continue as well.

The contingency effort in Ohio is focused on creating a rabies immune raccoon population in target counties to prevent the westward spread of raccoon-strain rabies. Enhanced surveillance and vaccination of raccoons will greatly decrease the chance of exposure to human and domestic

animals, as well as prevent the westward spread of raccoon-strain rabies. The outbreak of raccoon-strain rabies is of great concern in Ohio, not only because of the high densities of raccoons in the Northeast, but because this outbreak has occurred on the western side of an existing ORV barrier that has been maintained and considered successful in nearly eliminating raccoon-strain rabies from the state. WS efforts to stem the spread of raccoon strain rabies will continue in this new area of concern, as well as the historically baited portion of the state in 2005.

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than $500 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews and passengers. The majority of strikes are caused by birds. From 1990 to 2004, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 2,416 wildlife strikes at Ohio airports. The FAA estimates, however, that the number of reported wildlife strikes only account for approximately 20 percent of all strikes that occur.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develop management tools to reduce these hazards.

Applying this scientific expertise, Ohio WS provided technical assistance to 29 civil and military airports in FY 2004. In Ohio, WS biologists and technicians provide on-site evaluations, comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments, wildlife hazard management plans, and airport expansion and design consultations to minimize wildlife presence. WS also trains airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft, and provides operational support to reduce wildlife hazards at airports. Two full-time wildlife biologists are stationed at two airports in Ohio to monitor and reduce wildlife hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods.

Protecting Livestock from Predators—Livestock are a very important industry in Ohio. In 1999, cattle values totaled $923 million. The National Agricultural Statistics Services (NASS) reported in 1999 that Ohio was the largest sheep producing State east of the Mississippi River and ranked third in the United States for its number of sheep operations. Ohio's hen laying inventory surpasses every other State in the Nation with 40.4 million birds producing 8.2 billion eggs annually, which accounts for 10 percent of the Nation's egg supply.

The NASS study estimated the value of Ohio livestock losses due to predators at $152,000 in 1999 for sheep and $454,100 in 2000 for cattle. Unfortunately, these losses are felt most acutely by small farmers. In Ohio, 97 percent of all farms are smaller than 1,000 acres and 84 percent of farms have less than $100,000 in annual sales.

WS biologists in Ohio help to reduce livestock losses due to predation. WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management, which combines multiple methods to thwart predators. Examples include night penning, improved husbandry practices, guard animals, nonlethal harassment techniques, and population reduction. WS also offers educational seminars and workshops to help producers implement management techniques to minimize livestock losses on their own.

NWRC conducts an extensive program of research and methods development to prevent and reduce livestock predation by wildlife. Studies are underway to develop more effective and less injurious coyote capture systems, sound-activated aversive conditioning collars for coyotes, and improved electronic frightening devices. Also, coyote territorial behavior and population modeling studies are underway to support the development of reproduction suppression strategies for areas with high-predation rates.

Major Cooperators

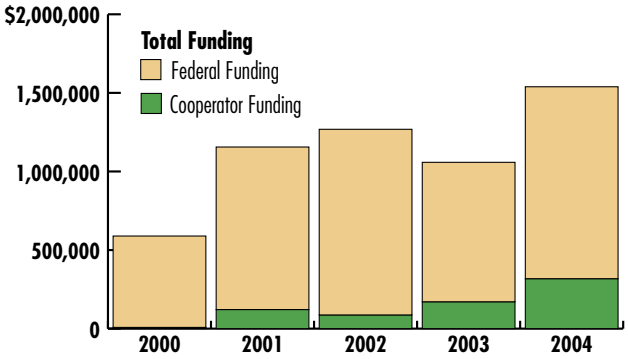
- Ohio Cattleman's, Pork Producers, Sheep Improvement, & Poultry Breeder Assoc.
- Ohio County Commissioners Association
- Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
- Ohio Livestock Coalition
- Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
- Ohio State University Extension
- Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health, and Transportation
- Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Federal Aviation Administration

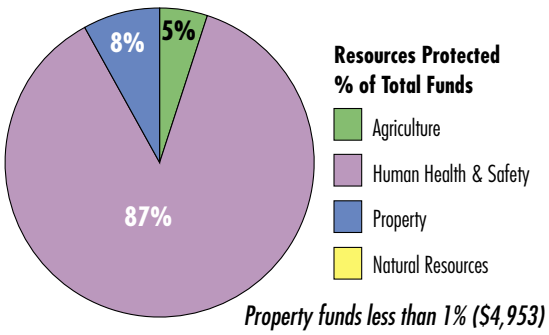
Looking to the Future

Ohio has more than 240 miles of shoreline along Lake Erie, and the number of requests received by WS to help minimize damage caused by gulls is increasing. Published literature indicates that the Lake Erie herring gull nesting population is increasing by more than 11 percent annually, and the number of nesting ring-billed gulls in the Great Lakes increased from 56,000 pairs in 1976 to more than 283,000 pairs in 1990. In addition, the black vulture population is increasing annually along with the number of damage complaints. Local govern-ments, residents, and producers, are continuing to report large numbers of European starling and other blackbird roosts in cities, crops and dairy facilities, causing significant public safety issues and crop damage. Ohio's double-crested cormorant populations are also on the rise, causing damage to the aquaculture industry and vegeta-tive habitat used by State-listed threatened and endangered species.

Ohio Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management. Seventy-five percent of WS Ohio funds are Congressionally directed to be spent on rabies protection.





Property funds less than 1% ($4,953)

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